18:3

With the Compliments of the Author.

UNION EFFORTS

BETWEEN

Congregationalists and Presbyterians:

RESULTS AND LESSONS.

JAPAN.

We propose to interrogate the past for a lesson needing to be learned to-day. For why should we try again, anywhere, an experiment which has been already tried with bitter results?

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN ONE.

There can be no divisions in the kingdom of Heaven. It is one and inseparable, now and forever. The gospel of this kingdom has, like gravitation, drawn the hearts of believers into manifold ways of expressing their inner unity. Yet in spite of this constant and heavy pressure, there have arisen schisms, dividing Christians one from another, causing denominations, wasting resources, and hindering often the conversion of sinners. The separations are incongruous, abhorrent on mission fields, and union is a consummation devoutly to be sought by every Christian.

THE DIVISIVE ELEMENT.

Doctrines and rites have divided; but when these divisions cease, a deeper element still separates. Polity is the great divisive element, often ignored, but asserting itself in every

attempt at union. There are four theories of the Church of Christ, which divide Christendom. Any plans which ignore these fail. No bridge can span the chasm between them. Unity can come in manifestation only by the death of opposing polities, in the triumph of the one which expresses the mind of Christ in his one kingdom, whatever that polity may be, whether the Papacy, or Episcopacy, or Presbyterianism, or Congregationalism.

EARLY ATTEMPTS AT UNION.

In the seventeenth century great efforts were made to unite Protestants. "Public conferences were held by the authority of princes." "A great multitude of individuals.... embarked in this pious cause on their own private authority." Among these was one John Dury, who spent forty years in traveling from country to country, visiting the leaders in church and state, advocating union on the broad foundation of the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, and the Apostles' Creed. His plan and efforts utterly failed, as did those of others. And since his day similar efforts have failed; and all similar efforts will ever fail, for they ignore the one divisive element.

So radical are the differences between polities, that attempts between two of them to co-operate in missionary work have borne bitter fruits. To prove which we will cite two plans of union for missionary labor between the Presbyterians and the Congregationalists.

I.—"THE PLAN OF UNION."

In 1801, the General Association of the Congregational Ministers of Connecticut proposed to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States a scheme for conducting home missions, which is known as "The Plan of Union." Its opening words are: "With a view to prevent alienations and promote union and harmony in those new settlements which are composed of inhabitants from Presbyterian and Congregational bodies," etc. The Plan provided for these special cases: "(1) A Congregational church with a Presbyterian pastor; (2) A Presbyterian church with a Congregational pastor; (3) A church part of whose members are Congregational, and part Presbyterian. In each of the first

two cases the church retains its own polity.....The third case seems to have been shaped with an intention to give to each class its own prerogatives." *

"This Plan strictly enjoined 'mutual forbearance and accommodation.' It allowed a Congregational church to settle a Presbyterian pastor, reserving to him the privilege of appeal to Presbytery or to a mutual council equally composed of Presbyterians and Congregationalists. In case a Presbyterian church settled a Congregational pastor, he might (appeal to, or) be tried by his Association, or a mutual council equally constituted of both denominations. In a Congregational church, the body of the male communicants of the church constituted the virtual session; yet here the appeal might be to a mutual council [if the appellant were a Congregationalist] or to Presbytery [if the appellant were a Presbyterian], in which the delegate of the church should have the right to sit and act as a ruling elder." "No one called in question the wisdom of the Plan till experience had revealed its defects." †

DEFECTS OF THE PLAN.

On the surface the Plan seemed fair and equal, but on one side it was sadly defective.

1. In matters of discipline an Association of Congregational Ministers was made by it equal to a Presbytery of Presbyterian churches; a non-ecclesiastical club was put on a par with an ecclesiastical court. By no one—layman, minister, church, Association or Presbytery—would the action of the Association be held as having the same authority as the action of a Presbytery. This difference was fatal to equality in the operation of the Plan.

2. The Congregational churches were not organized into conferences or associations till about a quarter of a century or more after the Plan of Union had been in operation; while the Presbyterian churches were associated in ascending judicatories from the start, and earlier. This gave the Presbyterians a tremendous advantage. The former largely defied the gravitation law of the kingdom of Heaven, unity in fellow-

* 5 Congregational Quarterly, 133, 134.

† Gillett's History Presbyterian Church, I., 438, 439.

ship; the latter built upon that law. True, the Congregational churches had a system of councils for advice on a few points, but no meetings for fellowship and co-operation. Hence the law of fellowship, like gravitation, constantly and unconsciously moved churches and ministers from the communion which so largely resisted it to the communion which so comprehensively obeyed it. The Congregational churches had to stand in comparative isolation or join the Presbytery. Isolation is repugnant to the kingdom of Heaven, but fellowship is its vital principle.

3. While the Plan gave a Presbyterian minister the right of appeal to Presbytery, which might be composed wholly of Presbyterians, it denied to a Congregational minister the right to be tried by a council composed wholly of Congregationalists. Instead, he must be tried by a council composed equally of Presbyterians and Congregationalists, or by his Ministerial Association which had not a shred of ecclesiastical authority —a palpable inequality.

4. The Plan provided no way for the withdrawal of a Congregational church from Presbytery, in case the desire for fellowship should carry it over into a temporary membership. On Congregational principles a church may by majority vote carry itself and its property into a willing Presbytery; but on Presbyterian principles no church can withdraw from an unwilling Presbytery by majority vote. The minority, however small, that remains is the church, possessed of all the property, funds, name, rights, and records. No case could be imagined more conclusive than the following:

In an official answer to a formal question a Presbytery in Ohio, in 1845, said: "All churches connected with the Presbytery of Medina are Congregational churches." But it added: "The Presbytery does not concede to a majority of a church the right to dissolve the connection between that church and the Presbytery, but regards the deserted minority which adheres to the original form and compact as the church." *

Other Presbyteries took the same position, which is justified by their principles, and confirmed everywhere in civil

* Oberlin Evangelist, for 1845, p. 71.

law; for a seceding body can legally carry nothing with it.

HOW THE PLAN WORKED.

With these four unobserved defects in a plan devised by Congregational ministers, it is little wonder that Presbyterians soon held "that a Congregational church according to this compact belongs to the Presbytery, on the accommodation plan," that is, the Plan of Union. Congregational missionaries in the West were told by Home Missionary Committees "that they were expected to join the Presbytery;" "that it would not be either desirable or wise to organize any Congregational churches;" "that there were no Congregational churches of any account, and no ministers and no Associations of that name in all the Territories of the Northwest." * This was said in 1831. As the law of gravitation, so the law of fellowship, has its way. Not until the Congregationalists became wise enough to form their churches into district and state associations, did the law of fellowship aid them. Before they did this, most of their churches planted under this Plan of Union were drawn by fellowship into Presbyteries. It is estimated that at least *two thousand* churches which were in origin Congregational thus became and remained Presbyterian,—a costly experiment was this Plan of Union of 1801.

But it may be replied, that this great loss to one party was a great gain to the other party, that the Congregational churches then lacked organization for fellowship and so could not well compete with organized Presbyterians; and that a similar experiment would not now be so disastrous to the freer polity, since it is fully organized. Quite likely; for the Plan was fatally defective, as we have seen, on the side of Congregationalism. Let us turn then to

THE RADICAL DEFECT OF THE PLAN.

That Plan did not contemplate the absorption of either party by the other, or the merging of the two polities in some middle form, neither the one nor the other; but it did contemplate the mixing up in home missionary churches of Congregationalists and Presbyterians. Those believing in the complete autonomy of each local church and those holding the

* Cong. Quarterly, 192.

divine subordination of the particular church to ascending judicatories, were to co-operate in a mixed system or plan. It was inevitable that misunderstandings, strifes, alienations, and separations should arise; and they arose, until each denomination was glad to clear itself from the entangling alliance. Notwithstanding the great advantages and gains which the Plan gave Presbyterians, they became alarmed because the New England theology, though Convinistic, was introduced by it into Presbyteries, Synods, and the General Assembly. Whole Synods, formed under the Plan, of churches largely or wholly Congregational endangered the Presbyterian standards by their broader interpretations; while the churches that composed them, by their Congregational origin and customs, were endangering the Presbyterian polity. Thus in doctrine and in polity "this alien and incongruous element" became "a source of great discord and trouble." "It became the occasion of disputes and misunderstandings." "The emulations and antagonisms that had been engendered began to exhibit themselves in those differences in sympathy and effort which after a few years conflict, resulted in separation."

"Their original differences were mainly those of polity, especially in relation to missionary and benevolent operations. The voluntary and ecclesiastical had each their zealous advocates." * The General Assembly became distracted over these imported issues, until, in 1837, the New School Synods were excinded. This Plan "to prevent alienations and promote union and harmony" was declared by the excinding body to be "mischievous," "unnatural and unconstitutional." But the Synods which were cut off formed a General Assembly, and turned to the Plan of Union, the mother of nearly all their churches, more devotedly than ever, and sought to use it for their more rapid enlargement, holding conventions of Presbyterians and Congregationalists, in which "the framers of the Plan of Union of 1801, were praised for their catholicity and wisdom, and the Plan itself was warmly commended to Congregational churches as a happy measure for unity and strength. Congregational ministers entering the West, were urged to connect themselves with Presbyteries. They were referred to the example of numbers who had done so; were

* 20 Cong. Quarterly, 565, 566.

assured that Congregationalism as a government was not strong enough for western people; that the west was really Presbyterian ground; that there was no certainty of obtaining aid from the Home Missionary Society, except through the Presbyterian channel; and that all attempts to organize and promote distinctive Congregationalism—as some of them were accustomed to phrase it—would be looked upon and treated as sectarian and schismatic." *

This attempt of the New School Presbyterians to rival, by absorbing the whole work of the New England Churches in the west, the Old School Assembly that had cut them off, stirred up opposition, rending churches, distracting communities, hindering missions, until, in 1852, the Congregationalists repudiated the Plan.

What hastened this repudiation has been thus stated in part: "At their organization, many, if not most, of these churches [which had been drawn into Presbytery], were promised a system of genuine New England Congregationalism soon—a promise which they could not forget, but one which their ministers seemed to them slow to perform." "Several, perhaps many, of these churches were drawn into Presbyteries without their own vote, and against their original intention, by a process of inviting a member to come in and see them, and so, after a season, *assuming* that this informal attendance constituted a virtual connection." "That many churches were divided and agitated deplorably, no one doubts or denies." "The grounds of the divisions were mainly—Aggressions upon the legitimate rights of Congregational churches and ministerial brethren." †

RESULTS.

The Plan of Union transformed over two thousand churches, which were in origin and usages Congregational, into Presbyterian churches. "Thus the Presbyterians actually absorbed almost all the domestic evangelical labors" of the Congregationalists, though the latter paid fully two-thirds of the expenses of planting them. "But for this Plan the institutions of New England would have been spread

* Rev. L. Smith Hobart.

† Dr. Cowles' Defence of Ohio Cong., 1, 2, 6, 7.

wherever her sons emigrated, and in fact New England, in all her liberty and union, would have spread over New York and all the west." * The Plan produced strife and often division in local churches, the bitterest alienations in wider communities, and the disrupture of the General Assembly. Had it never been devised by Congregational ministers and approved by the Presbyterian Church, but instead, had each denomination, as now, worked separately on its own lines, better work would have been done, and that too without the alienations and separations which marred that half century of union effort.

THE IMMISCIBLE.

Experience proved that the attempt to combine two fundamentally antagonistic polities in the Plan of Union for missionary work was unwise, however noble the motive. The Plan failed partly from its defective form, but chiefly because of radical and essential antagonism. The words of Judge Gibson, Chief Justice of Pennsylvania, from 1827 to 1851, are true: "The two systems [Congregationalism and Presbyterianism] are as immiscible as water and oil." How can two polities so antagonistic that they cannot mix, be made to work in harmony?

II.—UNION IN THE AMERICAN BOARD.

The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions is the oldest of American foreign missionary societies. It tried the experiment of uniting all American churches in one common society for foreign missions, and the result is instructive.

THE LONDON MISSIONARY SOCIETY.

In 1795, the Congregational churches of London, England, organized, after careful consultation, the London Missionary Society, mainly on the principles of their polity. It is "thoroughly democratic." The next year it adopted a "fundamental principle" for "the union of Christians of various denominations, in carrying out this great work" of foreign missions.

ORIGIN OF THE AMERICAN BOARD.

Four young men, in 1810, petitioned the General Associa-

* Minutes of Convention held at Michigan City, 1846, 33, 34.

tion of Massachusetts, a purely ministerial body at the time, to send them out as missionaries to foreign lands. After hearing the young men, the business was referred to a committee, which "reported resolves for instituting a Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions, to consist of nine members, all in the first instance to be chosen by the General Association, and afterwards annually, five of them by this body and four by the General Association of Connecticut. The report was unanimously accepted. The General Association proceeded to institute a Board of Commissioners."

This significant action allowed an extension to other General Associations, in case the interest in missions spread, until all should be included. Thus the commissioners would have been chosen by the only existing State bodies meeting annually, which could claim in any way to represent the churches of those states, namely Ministerial Associations. The plan adopted at the outset made the Board responsible, by the annual election of its members, to the General Associations of Massachusetts and Connecticut, with the probable extension of the election, in due proportion, to other similar Associations. And when these bodies should become Associations of churches, as all but one have since become, then the Board would be responsible directly to the churches. This development would have made the American Board what it ought to be, the direct agent of the churches.

CHANGE OF BASE.

This ecclesiastical development was soon perverted. A petition for a charter was signed, February 12, 1812, because "very considerable funds" had been raised, and the Board found "it very inconvenient to manage and transact their business without an incorporation." There is nothing in the petition which asked or required that the nature of the organization should be changed; but, nevertheless, the charter entirely effected such a change. It took away from the General Associations the right and power of electing the corporate members, and gave to the corporators themselves and to their successors the sole power of such election. Thus the Board, from being a responsible agent, chosen annually by the General Associations, became by act of the legislature a

close, self perpetuating corporation, in whose continuance and control the churches and individuals supporting it have no direct voice. From a quasi ecclesiastical body it became thereby a non-ecclesiastical Board.

REASON FOR THE CHANGE.

The petitioners did not ask for this radical change. The Associations did not, we believe, authorize it. The legal standing and efficiency of the Board did not require it. Probably the revolution was effected to enable the Board to become a union society. The Board had been organized by Congregationalists exclusively. Its original articles provided for its continuance as a Congregational Board. "The Board seems at first to have had no thought of becoming anything more than a Congregational body." Even "at its second meeting, in 1811, it suggested to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church the forming of a similar body of its own, with which the Board might co-operate in the work of foreign missions." The General Assembly replied, "that, as the business of foreign missions may properly be best managed under the direction of a single Board, so the numerous and extensive engagements of the Assembly, in regard to domestic missions, render it extremely inconvenient at this time, to take a part in the business of foreign missions."

CO-OPERATION THROUGH THE BOARD.

With this reply of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian church and with its charter of incorporation before them, "the Board was led to extend its membership into the Presbyterian church; and at the annual meeting of 1812, eight commissioners were added from among the prominent members of that church." Thus the Board began the experiment of union in foreign missionary work before the experiment in the home field had had time for development and failure.

The next year, 1813, a corporate member was elected from the Associate Reformed church; and in 1816, a member of the Dutch Reformed church was made a commissioner. Thus in six years from its organization, and four from its incorporation, the Board numbered four denominations in its management and support. The hope of uniting the evangeli-

cal denominations in "a single Board" for the prosecution of foreign missions, bid fair to be realized.

WITHDRAWAL FROM THE BOARD.

But the co-operation did not extend further. Instead, in 1822, the denominations in connection with the Board were reduced to three, by the union of the Associate Reformed church with the Presbyterian church.

The American Board, in 1857, consented to the dissolution of a compact entered into in 1832 with the Dutch Reformed church, and to the transfer of certain missions (Amoy and Arcot) to the Board of Foreign Missions of that church.

Then, in 1870, the rival Presbyterian General Assemblies, which for thirty-three years had walked apart, became one again, constraining the New School body to withdraw its churches from the support of the American Board. Here, too, there was an amicable transfer of missions to the Presbyterian Board. If any missionary did not wish to be so transferred, the American Board permitted him to be removed to some other station, "the missions, as such, being transferred."

HOW THE UNION WORKED.

Thus in fifty-eight years of united effort, every denomination invited into co-operation through the American Board had withdrawn. Nor had the union been peaceful in results. There had been formed, in 1817, the United Foreign Missionary Society by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church and the Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church, which Society amalgamated with the American Board, in 1826, by vote of the General Assembly. But the strife was not allayed by this vote; for, in 1831, the General Assembly appointed commissioners to confer with the American Board, who reported, among other things, that the Board fully represented the Presbyterian, Dutch Reformed, and Congregational churches, and sustained the same relation to each;" and, "that the Board, its Prudential Committee, and its missionaries, were under very high responsibility to the three denominations and to the Christian public." But this report did not satisfy the strict believers in Church Boards, responsible organically to the churches supporting them—which the American Board was not; for the General Assembly that very

year instituted a Board of their own. Yet a part held to the American Board. This controversy over Church Boards, that is, over polity, was one of the chief causes that, in 1837, rent the Presbyterian church in twain. "The original differences were mainly those of polity, especially in relation to missionary and benevolent operations."

THE BOARD CONGREGATIONAL.

When the other denominations withdrew, and supported boards of their own, the American Board was left with its founders, the Congregationalists. If there were any doubt of this, it would be removed by the following conclusive facts:

1. They went out, constrained by polity to do so; but, by going out, they forfeited all rights, claims, funds, and property as respects the American Board; for a seceding body can legally take nothing with it.

2 No one would question this, except in equity, but even this claim in equity is removed by the transfer of missions on the withdrawal of each seceding body.

3. The withdrawing bodies have since laid no claim to the Board, whether of suggestion or of control in any way.

4. Bequests or contributions from Presbyterians cannot for a moment be held to dictate a union policy any more than bequests or contributions from Congregationalists can be held to fix a union policy upon the Presbyterian Board. Of course, in either case, bequests, if received, must not be perverted from conditions imposed therein.

The Board is, therefore, the agent of the Congregational churches, through whose associations it makes its appeals chiefly for men and money. As no other than Congregational churches, as such, have since 1870 operated through the Board, its own rule applies, namely: "As to *ecclesiastical usages;* which must be, substantially, such as prevail among the churches operating through the Board."

ATTITUDE OF THE BOARD.

At the annual meeting of the Board, 1871, after the withdrawal of the Presbyterians and the transfer of missions to them, the Home Secretary, on behalf of the Prudential Committee, read a paper, which was approved, and ordered printed and circulated in special forms. In this paper he said: "But

a part of our constituency has also left us....While many of our Presbyterian friends have kindly assured us of their purpose to aid us hereafter, the number of such must regularly decrease; and in like manner the legacies from this quarter must become less and less. Hence, assuming that our disbursements are to continue undiminished, we shall need larger contributions from our Congregational churches." He then gives an elaborate argument to show why those churches should make larger contributions. "These churches owe such an endeavor (1) to the memory of their founders, (2) to their own missionary history, (3) to their polity, (4) to their denominational necessities, and (5) to Him who has made them what they are." "Such then is the duty of the Congregational churches."

Hence the Foreign Secretary could say truly in the official report of the Board to the National Council, in 1874: "The Board originated with Congregationalists....Other religious bodies have joined with them for a season, rendered valuable aid in the prosecution of the work, and then withdrawn, leaving the Board with its Congregational constituency, save as individuals of other denominations still contribute to its treasury, or share its labors in the foreign field."

Thus the Home and the Foreign Secretary, the Prudential Committee, and the Board itself have in these utterances, and in their appeals in State Associations, and in the National Council, since 1871, presented the American Board, not as a Union Society, but as a Congregational Board. For it now or hereafter, while the conditions remain the same, to assume to be otherwise, that is, undenominational, would be "a virtual breach of trust."

ITS DUTY AS DENOMINATIONAL.

This duty is made clear by its Manual for Missionary Candidates, which says: "As to his *teaching;* which must be conformed to the evangelical doctrines generally received by the churches sustaining the Board, and set forth in their well-known confessions of faith. As to *ecclesiastical usages;* which must be, substantially, such as prevail among the churches operating through the Board" These are two of the three "distinct and well understood pledges," which every missionary comes under in entering the service of the Board. There

are no "churches" but the Congregational at present "sustaining the Board." Hence every missionary is under "distinct and well understood pledges" to teach the doctrines and observe the "ecclesiastical usages" of the Congregational churches of America. The Board cannot consistently insist on doctrines and neglect polity in its missions.

NEED OF TEACHING POLITY.

This paper shows that the two great attempts to unite Presbyterians and Congregationalists in missionary work at home and abroad, have utterly failed. Better work would have been done with greater harmony, if each denomination had pursued its own methods without co-operation. The union efforts rent one denomination in twain, and entailed great loss on the other. Portions of the west are yet cursed by the bitterness engendered in that strife. Hence the question presses: Shall the missions now under the Board be suffered to try the experiment over again? Shall our missionaries be enjoined to keep their pledge of doctrine but denied the privilege of keeping their pledge of polity? The Board seems bound by its principles and rules to teach the one as much as the other.

A CASE IN POINT.—JAPAN.

The churches planted by the Board in Japan—and this mission was begun in 1869, one year before the withdrawal of the Presbyterians—are agitated over the question of polity, as all the missions of the Board will sooner or later be, unless polity be taught them. They had been taught doctrine but not polity by the missionaries sent them. Indeed, in the present inquiry by those young churches into the teaching of the New Testament on the nature of the Christian church, many of the missionaries have remained silent. And the result has been not as those missionaries apparently hoped; for the Japanese, like the Anabaptists, the Puritans, and the Swedes, appear to be comprehending the polity of the primitive churches as conceded by nearly all church historians and writers. It may be well for them to find out by searching, that each church is autonomous, as shown from the nature of the kingdom of Heaven in manifestation, and from the New Testament; but if this is true of polity why not also of doctrine?

Why allow them to be distracted over the one and not over the other? Why not use past experiences and results in both cases alike to guide them? Had polity been taught in Japan, the present controversy there, and probable loss, would not probably have occurred, at any rate, in its present form. And as a similar agitation is sure to overtake all the missions of the Board, why not forestall it by suitable teaching? This is a question of pertinence, not of impertinence, which the churches sustaining the Board have a right to ask, and to have answered. Mission churches cannot do what no churches in eighteen centuries have ever done, namely, exist without a polity. If they must have one, why not teach the "ecclesiastical usages," which "prevail among the churches operating through the Board—the primitive polity?"

III. THE PROPOSED UNION IN JAPAN.

It must be confessed that the union efforts given in this paper are not the same as that proposed in Japan. Here, Congregationalists and Presbyterians planned to work together in missions at home and abroad; there, the proposal is to become one, and that one, Presbyterian. Stimulated by the union of the various Presbyterian missions, which had the same faith and polity, with slight variations, it was proposed to make a great national church by absorbing missions planted by the American Board, under the name "The Church of Christ in Japan." Let us examine very briefly but justly the proposed union as given in its proposed constitution.

1 A Congregational church becomes a member of "the Church of Christ in Japan" by voting to accept the constitution. In doing so it delegates "certain specified powers to bukwai," namely, the licensing of probationers, the ordination, installation, release, and discipline of pastors, the organization and admission of churches, appointment of delegates, decision of appeals from churches, unless referred to a committee.

2 Powers not so delegated a church reserves. "A church may therefore adopt such a form of internal organization as it may deem advisable." But "in any case however provision shall be made for the representation of the church in bukwai and renkwai." That is, it must have connection with the bukwai.

3 Under this constitution a company of believers in Christ cannot organize themselves into a church without the consent of the bukwai. Nor can a church in connection with bukwai ordain, install, dismiss, or discipline a pastor, without the consent of the bukwai. Nor can it withdraw from this connection.

4 A church by vote may join a consenting bukwai with all its property and records; but, once in, no majority vote can take it out. The minority that remains behind is the church, and retains all the records and property. This is not of course written in the bond of union proposed, but it is there just the same; for the fundamental principle of that constitution is Presbyterian, as all who have read it agree in asserting; and on Presbyterian principles, the minority remaining in connection with the bukwai is the church possessed of all the property and rights. This principle has been often decided by our highest courts,—and justice is the same everywhere.

The proposed constitution is Presbyterian in principle and development; for no form of creed has anything more than a historical connection with the polity. It seemed a bold proposal, under the glamor of Union, to deliver up the mission churches of the American Board bodily, without reflection, to the Presbyterians. The constitution is so palpably Presbyterian, that the leaders of both parties have agreed to a modified form of it, which form has not been sufficiently reported for just criticism. But the Congregational churches in their May meeting of the present year failed to agree in accepting it as modified, but proposed other changes. This "came as a surprise" to the Presbyterians; though we are assured that "the Congregational missionaries and ministers" were "fully content with the book as thus modified;" and, also, "that the limit of concession has been reached" by the Presbyterians. Thus writes a Presbyterian missionary.

FULL AND FAIR DISCUSSION.

Whatever the outcome may be in Japan, we insist on full and fair discussion. The Presbyterians teach their polity. The American Board informs the Japanese through its Foreign Secretary that it has "very little regard to any church polity," that it does not write "to any missionary or mission urging the adoption of Congregationalism in anyway whatever as the

creed of the churches." When therefore a proposal to swallow up, in fact, our untaught mission churches, is made by churches and ministers well instructed in polity, why should it be held a matter for surprise or contempt, if the said uninstructed churches should take time to examine for themselves what the missionaries have neglected to teach them? Let them learn from the New Testament what the Board has denied them.

When the Japanese churches have carefully examined the questions of polity, they can act intelligently on the proposed plan of union, and will not repent of haste. But, if, without either instruction in polity by the missionaries or examination for themselves, they go into the union proposed, and afterwards repent of it, let them know assuredly that they cannot withdraw from it without the loss of all their church property, unless they provide for such possible withdrawal in the terms of the union. Without such provision in the organic law, no church could by vote or otherwise withdraw, without leaving behind as a seceding body records and property, thus beginning, naked and crippled, church life again after the model of the New Testament. It was chiefly the laymen in the Western States that saved Congregationalism from the extinction planned in the Union of 1801; and it may be that the laymen in our Japanese churches will save the primitive polity from extinction in the England of Asia. At any rate let not the Presbyterians be impatient if they take time for full inquiry.

NEED OF FELLOWSHIP.

The longing for union is based on the unity of the kingdom of Heaven, and it should be encouraged. But when it is proposed to unite in one two systems which are "as immiscible as water and oil," nothing is lost in examining the proposal carefully; for one or the other of the systems must surrender in toto its constitutive principle. Have the Presbyterians offered to make such a surrender? We have seen nothing that implied it. Are the Congregationalists willing to make the surrender proposed? They hesitate, to say the least. Can two walk together except they be agreed? This old question still requires a negative answer, and always will. Must, then, the Japanese churches and the other churches of the Board be

left in comparative isolation? No; we answered this question in the *Congregational Quarterly* for 1874, (vol. xvi, 291-303), and sent reprints of it to England and some of her Colonies. We quote from the said article on

"AN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL."

"Furthermore, an Ecumenical Council will establish a much needed bond between our missionary and the home churches, as also between the little clusters and the larger constellations. These separate churches and little scattered groups are necessarily surrounded by adverse ecclesiastical influences. They are threatened in respect to polity by a foe more dangerous than persecution and as insidious as the unfelt malaria. Hitherto we have suffered them to withstand alone these influences as best they might, without the offer of our cheering fellowship and counsel. They have neither heard the voice nor grasped the hand of their more than six thousand sister churches, for the strong have not spoken to the weak in sympathetic counsel, nor extended a helping hand to lighten their burdens. Would it be a matter of astonishment, then, if our scattered and mission churches longer neglected, feeling both the chilliness of their isolation and the impulses of the Holy Spirit constraining them to Christian unity, should forsake the cold manger where they were born and left by their parents for any ecclesiastical home that offers them fellowship and sympathy? They must be strong in their views of church government not to fall where others better circumstanced have fallen. But are they, especially the mission churches, strongly indoctrinated in the polity which we believe to be the Scriptural one? What have we to assure us here, where assurance seems to be needed?"

Events are verifying this forecast, and emphasize the needed completion of our organized fellowship, at as early a day as possible, in an Ecumenical Council, as advocated in 1874. Indeed, we rejoice in the speedy realization of our hopes, for the Congregational Union of England and Wales has taken favorable action thereon. Let our Japanese brethren, therefore, wait, if they will, until they have canvassed all questions of union thoroughly, and have felt the touch of

all the Congregational churches throughout the world; and then let them decide.

A. HASTINGS ROSS.

PORT HURON, MICH., JULY 10, 1889.

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